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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000351

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/RA, NEA/ARP, DRL/MLA, AND IO/SHA

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BA](#) [UNHRC](#)

SUBJECT: BAHRAIN AND THE 60TH SESSION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

REF: A. STATE 55091

[B](#). MANAMA 338

[C](#). STATE 41252

Classified By: CDA Robert S. Ford for reasons 1.4(b)(d).

1.(C) SUMMARY

Bahrain's senior International Organizations official stated that his country would support the U.S. candidacy for the Sub-Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Commission. He indicated basic agreement with U.S. positions on religious intolerance and democracy and was open to U.S. ideas on possible resolutions on development and the death penalty. With the caveat that Bahrain will, under no circumstances, vote against Arab Group consensus, Bahrain may be able to vote with the U.S. on the DPRK, Belarus, Russia (Chechnya), and Afghanistan. Bahrain supports our Iraq position. We expect Bahrain to vote against the U.S. position on Cuba, China, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Zimbabwe. Bahrain would like to see greater U.S. - Arab Group cooperation on resolution texts to avoid confrontation with the U.S. on Middle East human rights resolutions. END SUMMARY.

BAHRAIN SUPPORTS US SUB-COMMISSION CANDIDACY, OPPOSES CUBA RESOLUTION

2.(C) P/E Chief reviewed reftel issues on March 10 with MFA Director for International Organization Affairs Ghassan Shaikho (strictly protect). Before calling in his notetakers, Shaikho said he had discussed Bahrain's U.N. voting record last year with his superiors, highlighting the fact that Iran voted with the U.S. more than Bahrain. However, his bosses had reacted with indifference to his message that Bahrain should at least do better than Iran. He predicted that Bahrain would again vote against a Cuba resolution as compensation for Cuban support of Bahrain in the Commission during the 90's. On a positive note, Shaikho confided that he had instructed his Mission in Geneva to vote in favor of David Rivkin's candidacy for the Sub-Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. STYLE MATTERS IN VOTE CANVASSING

3.(C) Shaikho also cautioned the U.S. on its diplomatic style in the Commission, saying that a Gulf country had recently complained to Bahrain that the U.S. delegation had "bullied" its delegation in Geneva. Shaikho stated that the U.S. delegation has a reputation for making "overly strong private pitches" and presenting resolutions with "excessively confrontational" preambular language and "harsh" operative paragraphs. Shaikho suggested that a gentler, softer touch might win us more votes.

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE, DEMOCRACY, DEVELOPMENT, DEATH PENALTY, AND CORPORATE NORMS

4.(C) With notetakers present, Shaikho said that Bahrain could support the expected Dutch resolution on religious intolerance if it included last year's language on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. After all, he quipped, Arabs are Semites. Noting that he had not yet seen a draft, Shaikho said Bahrain would probably support Rumania's democracy resolution and he expressed hope that Bahrain, as a regional leader in political reform and a participant in the Community of Democracies, would be included in the Commission's democracy caucus. Shaikho noted our position that any development resolution be consistent with statements agreed at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey and the WTO Ministerial in Doha. Bahrain opposes the death penalty, Shaikho said, but understood our approach and might be able to work with us to explore options other than an omnibus resolution. He noted our position on the Sub-Commission's Norms on the human rights responsibilities of businesses, but made no substantive comment other than to advise his notetakers to "watch out for the G-77 position on the issue."

COUNTRY RESOLUTIONS

5.(C) Shaikho stated forthrightly that Bahrain does not like country resolutions and suggested that offering technical

assistance packages would be a more useful tool for convincing countries to improve their human rights records. Shaikho made no promises on a China resolution, but listened attentively to our list of China's 2003 backsliding on human rights. (COMMENT: We seriously doubt that Bahrain would vote against China. END COMMENT) He made clear that Bahrain could not support us on Iran, but intimated that we could probably expect Bahraini support on the DPRK. He reiterated Bahrain's support for our position on Iraq. After asking his staff to research the Afghanistan Independent Expert concept in detail, Shaikho suggested we could expect Bahrain's support here as well. On the other hand, Shaikho advised that Bahrain's support for the Turkmenistan resolution would be unlikely if Turkmenistan lobbied the Islamic caucus. Support for a resolution on Belarus seemed possible, Shaikho indicated, and was very likely on a Russia (Chechnya) resolution after the recent assassination in Qatar. Shaikho concluded that a Bahrain vote for a Zimbabwe resolution would be impossible unless African consensus broke. He said African support for Arab Group positions is too important for an Arab state to vote against Africa Group consensus.

MIDDLE EAST

6.(C) Shaikho implored the U.S. not to support a move to try to cut by 50 percent the time allotted to Arab Group issues. He said Bahrain did not want confrontation at the Commission. Shaikho recommended that the U.S. try to work with the Arabs to narrow differences on texts. This, he thought, would be a win/win solution. He mentioned favorably the Bahraini PerRep's recent meeting with the USDEL leader and suggested that Bahrain could help facilitate better understanding between the U.S. and the Arab Group.

COMMENT

7.(C) Bahrain entered the Human Rights Commission with the goal of vindicating its human rights record, rather than with the objective of improving human rights around the world. Bahrain's view appears to have altered during its term on the Commission; hence our optimism that we may see more support than previously. However, Bahrain will not break Arab Group consensus, nor will it vote against those countries that supported Bahrain during the 90's. END COMMENT.
FORD